National Detector Dog Manual

Appendix G

Expressing Anal Glands

Expressing Anal Glands

All dogs have a pair of sac-like anal glands located under the tail, just inside each side of the anus (***Figure G-1-1***). The sacs hold a thick, foul smelling, brownish glandular fluid. The fluid is naturally secreted in minute quantities as the dog defecates. Although domestic dogs rarely release these glandular secretions for scent marking, they can, in some cases, be voluntarily emptied when the dog is extremely alarmed, struggling, or as a self defense mechanism. If the dog produces large quantities of the secretion, or if the ducts leading to the anus become blocked, the glands can become impacted which can lead to the formation of an abscess. An abscess, if untreated, may rupture through the skin and will require veterinary treatment. Dogs with impacted anal glands may "scoot" their rear ends on the ground to relieve the pressure in the glands, or they may lick the anal area excessively or "flag" the tail to one side.

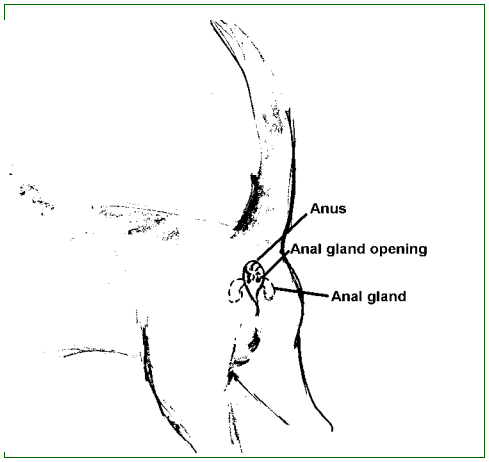

FIGURE G-1-1: Location of Anal Glands

The care required of the anal glands is highly individualized. If you see any of the above signs, take the dog to a veterinarian or express the anal glands using the following steps:

Step 1:

Secure the dog, as some dogs resent having their anal glands expressed, and most try to investigate the process once it has begun.

Step 2:

Grasp the base of the dog's tail with one hand, gently raise the tail to expose and slightly tighten the skin over the anus.

Step 3:
Place the thumb and forefinger of either hand on each side of the anus. You may feel two “pea-like” lumps, which are the glands.

Step 4:
Press the thumb and forefinger in and together, then squeeze, sliding fingers out toward the anal opening. Foul, fishy-smelling fluid may drip or squirt from the anus. If the secretion is white, bloody, or contains pus, you should contact your veterinarian.

Step 5:
Wipe the anal area to remove the fluid. To ensure that you have removed all traces of the fluid, use a damp, soapy cloth and a mild antibacterial soap.